

THE
PREFACE
Mr. ^{William} CHILLINGWORTH'S
JUDGMENT
OF THE
RELIGION
OF
Protestants, &c.

THE P R E F A C E.

I Presume, there's no Protestant acquainted in any measure with Books that defend his Religion against the Papists, who has not a high Esteem of Mr. Chillingworth's Book, intitled, *The Religion of Protestants a safe Way to Salvation*: a Man singled out from among all the learned Men of those times, as best qualified for that Undertaking against a most learned Jesuit. His Book in order to Printing was not only approved of by those of greatest Learning and Authority in the Church, but was commended to the Press by the Suffrages of the then Vice-Chancellor, and both the King's and Margaret Professors of Divinity in the University of Oxon; and since its Publication has had the highest Commendations of most, if not all learned Protestants, as the most learned and judicious Work of any that had been published before upon that Subject. It was first printed in the Year 1637. and dedicated to King Charles the First; and then reprinted 1663. and for more common Use made shorter, by leaving out personal Matters; was printed again Anno 1685. as a most rational Defence against Popery, then breaking in upon us like a *Land Flood*. Out of this excellent Book I have collected those excellent Passages which give a brief Account of the Religion of Protestants, what it is; what Errors are dangerous, what not; that differing Protestants agree in all things necessary to Salvation; that it's Unchristian to use Force in Matters merely Religious; what is the Fountain of all the Schisms of the Church, and the Calamities that have infested Christianity about Opinions in Religion; and that universal Liberty well moderated is the way to reduce Christians to Truth and Unity.

Of the Religion of Protestants.

CHap. 6. Num. 56. Know then, Sir, that when I say the Religion of Protestants is in Prudence to be preferred before yours! As on the one side I do not understand by your Religion the Doctrine of *Bellarmino* or *Baronius*, or any other private Man amongst you; nor the Doctrine of the *Sorbon*, or of the *Jesuits*, or of the *Dominicans*, or of any other particular Company amongst you, but that wherein you all agree, or profess to agree, *The Doctrine of the Council of Trent*. So accordingly on the other side, by the Religion of Protestants, I do not understand the Doctrine of *Luther* or *Calvin*, or *Melancthon*, nor the Confession of *Augsburg* or *Genève*, nor the Catechism of *Heidelberg*, nor the Articles of the Church of *England*, no, nor the Harmony of Protestant Confessions; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater Harmony, as a perfect Rule of their Faith and Actions; that is, the BIBLE, the BIBLE, I say the BIBLE only is the Religion of Protestants! Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain irrefragable, indubitable Consequences of it, well may they hold it as a Matter of Opinion, but not as a Matter of Faith and Religion; neither can they with Conscience to their own Grounds believe it themselves, nor require the Belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical Presumption. I, for my part, after a long (and as I verily believe and hope) impartial Search of the true way to *Eternal Happiness*, do profess plainly, that I cannot find any Rest for the Sole of my Foot, but upon this Rock only. I see plainly and with mine own Eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others; the

same Fathers against themselves, a Consent of Fathers of one Age, against a Consent of Fathers of another Age; the Church of one Age against the Church of another Age; traditive Interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found: No Tradition but only of Scripture can derive it self from the Fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in, in such an Age after Christ, or that in such an Age it was not in. In a word, there is no sufficient Certainty but of the Scripture only, for any considering Man to build upon. This therefore, and this only, I have Reason to believe; this I will profess, according to this I will live, and for this, if there be Occasion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly lose my Life, though I should be sorry that Christians should take it from me. Propose me any thing out of this Book, and require whether I believe it or no; and seem it never so incomprehensible to humane Reason, I will subscribe it with Hand and Heart, as knowing no Demonstration can be stronger than this, *God hath said so, therefore it is true*. In other things I will take no Man's Liberty of Judgment from him, neither shall any Man take mine from me; I will think no Man the worse Man or the worse Christian; I will love no Man the less for differing in Opinion from me; and what measure I meet to others, I expect from them again: I am fully assured that God does not, and therefore that Men ought not to require any more of any Man than this, To believe the Scripture to be God's Word, to endeavour to find the true Sense of it, and to live according to it.

N. 57. This is the Religion which I have chosen, after a long Deliberation, and I am

verily persuaded that I have chosen wisely, much more wisely than I had guided myself according to your Churches Authority; for the Scripture being all true, I am secured by believing nothing else, that I shall believe no Falsity, nor Witness of Faith: And if I mistake the Sense of Scripture, and so fall into Error, yet I am secure from any Danger thereby, if but your Grounds be true; because endeavouring to find the true Sense of Scripture, I cannot but hold my Error without Persecution, and be ready to forsake it, when a more true and a more probable Sense shall appear unto me. And then all necessary Truth being, as I have proved, plainly set down in Scripture, I am certain by believing Scripture to believe all necessary Truth; and he that does so, if his Life be answerable to his Faith, how is it possible he should fail of Salvation?

*Scripture the only Rule whereby to
Judge of Controversies.*

CHAP. 2. N. 11. — To speak properly (as Men should speak when they write of Controversies in Religion) the Scripture is not a Judge of Controversies, but a *Rule only*, and the *only Rule for Christians to judge them by*: Every Man is to judge for himself with the Judgment of Discretion, and to choose either his Religion first, and then his Church, as we say; or at you, his Church first, and then his Religion. But by the Consent of both sides, every Man is to judge and choose; and the Rule whereby he is to direct his Choice, if he be a natural Man, is Reason; if he be already a Christian, Scripture, which we say is the Rule to judge all Controversies by, yet not all simply, but all the Controversies of Christians, of those that are already agreed upon this first Principle, that *the Scripture is the Word of God*. But that there is any Man, or any Company of Men, appointed to be Judge for all Men, that we deny; and that I believe you will never prove.

*Every Man to judge for himself in
Matters of Religion.*

CHAP. 2. N. 16. In civil and criminal Causes the Parties have for the most part so much Interest, and very often so little Honesty, that they will not submit to a Law though never so plain, if it be against them; or will not see it to be against them, though it be never so plainly: Whereas if Men were honest, and the Law were plain and extended to all Cases, there would be little need of Judges. Now in Matters of Religion, when the Question is, Whether every Man be a fit Judge and Chooser for himself? we suppose Men honest, and such as understand the Difference between a Moment and Eternity; and such Men, we conceive, will think it highly concerns them to be of the true Religion, but nothing at all that this or that Religion should be the true: And then we suppose that all the necessary Points of Religion are plain and easy, and consequently every Man in this Case to be a competent Judge for himself; because it concerns himself to judge right as much as Eternal Happiness is worth; and if through his own Default he judge amiss, he alone shall suffer for it.

Chap. N. 21. — If they [Men] would be themselves, and be content that others should be, in the choice of their Religion, the Servants of God and not of Men; if they would allow, that the Way to Heaven is no narrower now than Christ left it, his Yoke no heavier than he made it; that the Belief of no more Difficulties is required now to Salvation, than was in the Primitive Church; that no Error is in itself destructive and exclusive from Salvation now, which was not then; if instead of being zealous Papists, earnest Calvinists, rigid Lutherans, they would become themselves, and be content that others should be plain and honest Christians; if all Men would believe the Scripture, and freeing themselves from Prejudice and Passion, would sincerely endeavour to find the true Sense of it, and live according to it, and require no more of others.

others but to do so, not denying their Communion to any that do so; would so order their publick Service of God, that all which do so may without Scruple or Hypocrisy, or Protestation against any Part of it, join with them in it; who does not see that (seeing as we suppose here, and shall prove hereafter) all necessary Truths are plainly and evidently set down in Scripture; there would of necessity be among all Men, in all things necessary, Unity of Opinion? And notwithstanding any other Differences that are, or could be, Unity of Communion, and Charity, and mutual Toleration; by which means all Schism and Heresy would be banished the World; and those wretched Contentions which now rend and tear in pieces not the Coat, but the Members and Bowels of Christ, which mutual Pride and Tyranny, and cursing, killing and damning, would fain make immortal, should speedily receive a most blessed Catastrophe. But of this hereafter, when we shall come to the Question of Schism, wherein I persuade myself that I shall plainly shew, that the most vehement Accusers are the greatest Offenders, and that they are indeed at this time the greatest Schismatics, who make the Way to Heaven narrower, the Yoke of Christ heavier, the Differences of Faith greater, the Conditions of Ecclesiastical Government harder and stricter, than they were made at the Beginning by Christ and his Apostles; they who talk of Unity, and aim at Tyranny, and will have Peace with none but with their Slaves and Vassals.

Pres. N. 20. — For what one Conclusion is there in the whole Fabrick of my Discourse, that is not naturally deducible out of this one Principle, *That all things necessary to Salvation are evidently contained in the Scriptures?* Or what one Conclusion almost of Importance is there in your Book, which is not by this one clearly confutable? Grant this, and it will presently follow, in opposition to your first Conclusion, and the Argument of your first Chapter, That amongst Men of different Opinions, touching the obscure and controverted Questions of Religion, such as may with Probability be disputed on both sides (and such are the Disputes of Protestants) good Men and

Lovers of Truth of all sides may be saved, because all necessary things being supposed evident concerning them, with Men so qualified, there will be no Difference; there being no more certain Sign that a Point is not evident, than that honest and understanding and indifferent Men, and such as give themselves Liberty of Judgment, after a mature Consideration of the Matters, differ about it.

Of disagreeing Protestants.

ANs. to *Pres. N. 26.* — The most disagreeing Protestants that are, yet thus far agree, that these Books of Scripture which were never doubted of in the Church, are the undoubted Word of God, and a perfect Rule of Faith. 2. That the Sense of them which God intended, whatsoever it is, is certainly true; so that they believe implicitly even those very Truths against which they err; and why an implicit Faith in Christ and his Word should not suffice as well as an implicit Faith in your Church, I have desired to be resolved by many of your side, but never could. 3. That they are to use their best Endeavours to believe the Scripture in the true Sense, and to live according to it. This, if they perform (as I hope many on all sides do) truly and sincerely, it is impossible but that they should believe aright in all things necessary to Salvation, that is, in all those things that pertain to the Covenant between God and Man in Christ; for so much is not only plainly, but frequently contained in Scripture, and believing aright the Covenant, if they for their Parts perform the Condition required of them, which is sincere Obedience, why should they not expect that God will perform his Promise, and give them Salvation? For, as for other things which lie without the Covenant, and are therefore less necessary, if by reason of the seeming Conflict which is oftentimes between Scripture, Reason, and Authority on the one side, and Scripture, Reason, and Authority on the other; if by reason of the Variety of Tempers, Abilities, Educations, and unavoidable Prejudices, whereby Mens Understandings

understandings are variously formed and fashioned, they do embrace several Opinions, whereof some must be erroneous: to say that God will damn them for such Errors, who are Lovers of him, and Lovers of Truth, is to rob Man of his Comfort, and God of his Goodness; it is to make Man desperate, and God a Tyrant.

Job. N. 27. That it is sufficient for any Man's Salvation, that he believe the Scripture, that he endeavour to believe it in the true Sense of it as far as concerns his Duty; and that he conform his Life unto it, either by Obedience or Repentance: He that does so, (and all Protestants, according to the *Distinction* of their Religion, should do so) may be secured that he cannot err Fundamentally; so that notwithstanding their Differences, and your Presumption, *the same Mercies may receive them all.*

Job. N. 29. Who can find fault with him [Dr. Potter] for saying: If through want of Means of Instruction, Incapacity, invincible or probable Ignorance, a Man die in Error, he may be saved: But if he be negligent in seeking Truth, unwilling to find it, either doth seek and will not, or might see it and will not, that his Case is dangerous, and without Repentance desperate?

Ch. 1. N. 11. Methinks, with much more Reason, and much more Charity, you must suppose that many of these Controversies which are now disputed among Christians, (all which profess themselves Lovers of Christ, and truly desirous to know his Will and do it) are either not decidable by that Means which God hath provided, and so not necessary to be decided; or if they be, yet not so plainly and evidently, as to oblige Men to hold one way: Or lastly, if decidable, and evidently decided, yet you may hope that the *erring Part*, by reason of some Veil before their Eyes, some excusable Ignorance, or unaccountable Prejudice, does not see the Question to be decided against him, and so opposes not that which he doth know to be the Word of God, but only that which you know to be so, and which he might know, were he void of Prejudice: which is a Fault, I confess, but a Fault which is incident even to good and ho-

nest Men very often; and not of such a Gigantick Disposition as you make it, to fly directly upon God Almighty, and to give him the Lie to his Face.

Of the Necessity of a Visible Judge in Controversies of Religion, as well as in Civil Matters.

Ch. 2. N. 17.—In Civil Controversies we are obliged only to external Passive Obedience, and not to an internal and active. We are bound to obey the Sentence of the Judge, or not to resist it, but not always to believe it just. But in Matters of Religion, such a Judge is required whom we should be obliged to believe to have judged right; so that in Civil Controversies every honest and understanding Man is fit to be a Judge, but in Religion none but he that is infallible.

5. In Civil Causes there is Means and Power, when the Judge has decreed to compel Men to obey his Sentence: otherwise I believe Laws alone would be to as much Purpose for the ending of Differences, as Laws and Judges both. But all the Power in the World is neither fit to convince, nor able to compel a Man's Conscience to consent to any thing: Worldly Terror may prevail so far, as to make Men profess a Religion which they believe not, (such Men, I mean, who know not that there is a Heaven provided for Martyrs, and a Hell for those that dissemble such Truths as are necessary to be professed) but to force either any Man to believe what he believes not, or any honest Man to dissemble what he does believe, (if God commands him to profess it) or to profess what he does not believe, all the Powers in the World are too weak, with all the Powers of Hell to assist them.

7. In Civil Matters it is impossible *Titius* should hold the Land in question, and *Symonius* too; and therefore either the Plaintiff must insure the Defendant by disqualifying his Possession, or the Defendant wrong the Plaintiff, by keeping his Right from him. But in Controversies of Religion the Case is otherwise; I may hold my Opinion, and do you

no Wrong, and you yours, and do me none. Nay, we may both of us hold our Opinions, and settle our selves as we see, provided the Difference be not touching any thing necessary to Salvation, and that we love Truth as well, as to be diligent to inform our Conscience, and constant in following it.

Concerning Errors damnable, or not damnable.

CHAP. II. 12. Answer, that these Differences between Protestants concerning Errors damnable, and not damnable; Truths fundamental, and not fundamental, may be easily reconciled; for either the Error they speak of may be *purely and freely involuntary*, or it may be; in respect of the *Cause of it, voluntary*: If the Cause of it be some voluntary and avoidable Fault, the Error is it self sinful, and consequently in its own Nature damnable; as if by Negligence in seeking the Truth, by Unwillingness to find it, by Pride, by Obstinacy, by desiring that Religion should be true which suits best with my Ends, by Fear of Mens ill Opinion, or any other worldly Fear, or any worldly Hope, I betray my self to any Error contrary to any Divine revealed Truth, that Error may be justly stiled a Sin, and consequently of it self so such an one damnable. But if I be guilty of none of these Faults, but be desirous to know the Truth, and diligent in seeking it, and advise not at all with Flesh and Blood about the Choice of my Opinions, but only with God, and that Reason that he hath given me: If I be thus qualified, and yet through humane Infirmitie fall into Error, that Error cannot be damnable. Again, the Party erring, may be conceived either to die with Contrition, for all his Sins known and unknown, or without it: If he die without it, this Error in it self, if damnable, will be likewise so unto him; if he die with Contrition, (as his Error can be no Impediment but he may) his Error, though in it self damnable to him, according to your Doctrine, will not prove so.

Of using Force in Matters of Religion.

CHAP. III. 95. But they *endeavored to force the Society, whereas they were Parties to be healed and reformed*; as they were; and if refused, they did; when they had Power, drive them away, even their Superiors, both spiritual and temporal; as is not unusual. The Proofs hereof are wanting, and therefore I might defer my Answer until they were produced; yet since this is before hand, if they did so, then it pain, in my Opinion, they did amiss; for I have learnt, from the antique Fathers of the Church, that *nothing is more against Religion, than to force Religion*; and of St. Pauls *The Weapons of the Christian Warfare are not carnal*. And great Reasons, for humane Violence may make Men counterfeit, but cannot make them believe, and is therefore for nothing, but to breed Form without, and Fiction within. Besides, if this Means of bringing Men to embrace any Religion were generally used, (as if it may be justly used in any Place, by those that have Power, and think they have Truth, certainly they cannot with Reason deny, but that it may be used in every Place by those that have Power as well as they, and think they have Truth as well as they) what could follow but the Maintenance perhaps of Truth, but perhaps only of the Protection of it in one Place, and the Oppression of it in an hundred? What will follow from it, but the Preservation perhaps of Unity, but peradventure only of Uniformity in particular States and Churches; but the immortalizing the greater and more lamentable Divisions of Christendom and the World? And therefore what can follow from it, but perhaps in the Judgment of carnal Policy, the temporal Benefit and Tranquillity of temporal States and Kingdoms, but the infinite Prejudice, if not the Dissolution of the Kingdom of Christ? And therefore it well becomes them who have their Portion in this Life, who serve no higher State than that of England, or Spain, or France, nor this neither, any further than they may serve themselves by it; who think of no other Happiness, but

but the Preservation of their own Fortunes and Tranquillity in this World; who think of no other Means to preserve States but humane Power and Machinings Policy, and believe no other Good but this. *Legitimè quod est verum habenti nihil injustum quod urit!* Such Men as these it may become to maintain by worldly Power and Violence, their State Infrum: or Religion: For if all be vain and false (as in their Judgement it is) the present Government is better than any, because it is already settled: An Alteration of it may draw with it Change of States, and the Change of State the Subversion of their Fortunes; but they that are indeed Servants and Lovers of Christ, of Truth, of the Church, and of Mankind, ought, with all Courage, to oppose themselves against it as a common Enemy of all these.

They that know there is a King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, by whose Will and Pleasure Kings and Kingdoms stand and fall; they know that to no King or State any thing can be profitable which is unjust, and that nothing can be more evidently unjust, than to force weak Men by the Profession of a Religion which they believe not, to lose their own eternal Happiness, out of a vain and needless Fear, lest they may possibly disturb their temporal Quietness, there being no Danger to any State from any Man's Opinion, unless it be such an Opinion by which Dissobedience to Authority or Impiety is taught or licensed: which sort I conceive may justly be punished as well in this World as in the next; or unless this languishing Doctrine be joined with it. That is to say, that by humane Violence to enforce others to it.

Chap. 4. N. 16. This presumptuous imposing of the Senses of Men upon the Words of God, the special Senses of Men upon the general Words of God, and laying them upon Mens Consciences together under the equal Penalty of Death and Damnation: This vain Conceit, that we can speak of the things of God better than the Words of God; this deifying our own Interpretations, and tyrannous

enforcing them upon others; this restraining of the Word of God, from that Latitude and Generality, and the Understandings of Men from that Liberty wherein Christ and the Apostles left them, * is, and hath been the only Fountain of all the Schisms of the Church, and that which makes them immortal: The common Inconcord of Christendom, and that which (as I said before) tears in pieces not the Coar, but the Bowels and Members of Christ: *Resiste Tyrannos, ne seducti Judea:* take away these Walls of Separation, and all will quickly be one. Take away this Persecuting, Burning, Cursing, Damning of Men for not subscribing to the Words of Men, the Speeds of Gods: require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no

Man Master but him only: let those leave claiming Infallibility, that have no Title to it, and let them that in their Words affirm it, affirm it likewise in their Actions. In a word, take away Tyranny, which is the Devil's Instrument to support Errors and Superstitions, and Impieties. In the several Parts of the World, which could not otherwise long withstand the Power of Truth.

Take away Tyranny, and restore Christians to their just and full Liberty of expressing their Reasonings in Scripture only: and as Rivers, when they have a free Passage, run all to the Ocean; so it may well be hoped by Gods Blessings, that universal Liberty thus moderated, may quickly reduce Christendom to Truth and Unity. These Thoughts of Peace (I am persuaded) may come from the God of Peace, and to his Blessing I recommend them.

This Persecution is no Singularity of mine, but the Doctrine which I have learned from Doctors of great Learning and Judgement. Let the Reader be pleased to serve the seventh Book. (Acts de Tyrannibus & Tyrannicis) Oration delivered by him after the composing of the Discord between him and Machius, and shall confess as much.